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INFO AMEMBASSY CARACAS
USCINCSO QUARRY HEIGHTS PN

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STATE PLS PASS OPIC

E.O. 12356: NA
TAGS: PINS, EPET, CO
SUBJECT: ECOPETROL SUPSENDS EXPLORATIONS IN ARUACA

REF: BOGOTA 11261

1. (U) THE COLOMBIAN NATIONAL OIL COMPANY, DECIDED ON AUGUST 18 TO SUSPEND ALL EXPLORATION ACTIVITY IN ARAUCA DUE TO ONGOING GUERRILLA ATTACKS. THE MINISTRY OF MINES IS QUOTED IN THE PRESS AS SAYING THAT ACTIVITY WAS SUSPENDED BECAUSE "GUERRILLA ACTION HAS BECOME SO EXTREME THAT NOT EVEN ECOPETROL CAN OPERATE IN ZONES IT HAS RESERVED FOR ITS OWN DIRECT EXPLORATION." EXPLORATION ACTIVITY WILL ONLY BE REINITIATED WHEN THE SECURITY SITUATION IMPROVES. OPERATIONS AT THE CANON-LIMON PRODUCTION FACILITY AND SHIPMENT THROUGH THE PIPELINE TO COVENAS ARE NOT AFFECTED BY THE DECISION.

2. (LOU) COMMENT. ECOPETROL'S DECISION WAS NOT TAKEN
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LIGHTLY AND WAS PROMPTED BY THE AUGUST 15 DESTRUCTION OF A HELITAXI HELICOPTER WORKING UNDER CONTRACT TO GSI. GSI IS DOING SEISMIC EXPLORATION FOR ECOPETROL IN ARAUCA, ECOPETROL'S MOST IMPORTANT EXPLORATION AREA.

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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE
REVIEW AUTHORITY: OSCAR J. OLSON
DATE/CASE ID: 29 OCT 2002 200201334

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ECOPETROL BELIEVES THE AREA GSI WAS EXPLORING CONTAINS ONE BILLION BARRELS OF RECOVERABLE RESERVES. OCCIDENTAL SOURCES TOLD EMBASSY THAT IT WAS IN FACT GSI THAT TOLD THE GOC IT WOULD NO LONGER WORK IN ARAUCA. GSI FEELS THAT ITS EMPLOYEES ARE BEING EXPOSED TO AN UNWARRANTED LEVEL OF RISK.

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